



# The County Commuter

## Gas Prices Climb To Record Highs

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### Points of interest:

- County Commuter Newsletter goes on-line!
- April is Earthquake Preparedness Month—are you prepared for commuting in crisis conditions?
- Empty your trunk for better fuel economy.
- Ridesharing cuts commuting costs in half

The average price of gasoline recently climbed to an all time new California record surpassing the previous high of \$2.03 set in May 2001. One year ago, the average price of a gallon of gasoline in Orange County was \$1.36 – don't we wish we could see those prices now!?

If you are suffering from sticker shock at the gasoline pump, the Automobile Club of America (AAA) offers these tips to help conserve fuel:

- Going to a meeting? Ask if someone else is going too. Then share the ride.
- Do what's called "trip chaining" – it means running all of your errands in a row so you're restarting an already warm, more fuel-efficient engine.
- Carpool to work – if you need a carpool partner, please log onto the Commuter Assistance Program's web site at [www.oc.ca.gov/hr/rideshare](http://www.oc.ca.gov/hr/rideshare), and click on **Carpool Connection** for a list of carpool-ready commuters. If you would like to be added to the on-line Carpool Classifieds list, click on **Request For Information** and print an application form and submit it to us.
- Run local errands by foot or bike whenever possible.
- Get the junk out of the trunk—each 100 lbs. of extra weight reduces fuel efficiency by 1%--the golf clubs have to go!
- Run an errand or go to lunch by bus instead of driving. Log onto [www.octa.net](http://www.octa.net) to get a transit itinerary – it'll take you where you need to go!
- Cut your trip short – drive to a local Park & Ride lot and take transit or a vanpool to work. For more information about the County's new vanpool subsidy, log onto the Commuter Assistance Program's web site at [www.oc.ca.gov/hr/rideshare](http://www.oc.ca.gov/hr/rideshare), and click on **Incentive Programs** to get more details.
- Limit your warm up – ten seconds to let your car idle is usually enough.
- Make sure your tires are properly inflated. Flat tires can cause drag, using more fuel to go.
- Keep your distance from other cars to avoid excessive acceleration and braking, which wastes gas.



*“Keep an  
emergency kit in  
your car.”*

## Commuting In A Crisis

You probably know that you should “duck and cover” if you feel an earthquake, but what should you do if you’re in your car during an emergency? Folks at Southern California Rideshare offer these tips to stay safe on the road:

- Plan several travel routes in advance. Freeways may be a mess, so be sure to take the time to map out a few alternate ways to get home using surface streets – be sure to have extra maps on hand too.
- Keep an “emergency kit” in your car. It should include the following:
  1. First aid kit
  2. Blanket
  3. Bottled water
  4. Flashlight and extra batteries
  5. Quarters for a pay phone
  6. Packaged food, such as granola bars or dried fruit
- Adopt the buddy system – be sure to let someone know where you are going before you leave the office. If a crisis hits, call your buddy to let them know where you are, and if you need help.
- Keep calm, and stay informed – tune your radio to a local all-news station for up-to-date information

Be prepared to take care of yourself, and help others if you can. Remember, April is earthquake preparedness month – visit [www.oea.ca.gov](http://www.oea.ca.gov) for more details on emergency services.

## Metrolink Subsidy

Many employees took advantage of the revised “Get Into Training” current rider incentive. Remember, as of January 1, 2003, if you have participated in past years, you are now eligible to submit a second current rider application for another \$100 voucher good toward the purchase of your next Metrolink ticket or pass. The same rules apply, but you can now submit for a voucher once every twelve months – it is not retroactive.

For a revised current rider application, or if you are interested in getting FREE tickets to try the commuter train, log onto the Commuter Assistance Program web site at [www.oc.ca.gov/hr/rideshare](http://www.oc.ca.gov/hr/rideshare), and click on the **Incentive Programs** button to print a copy of the current rider or new ride application.

Each quarter, as part of the “Get Into Training” program, we also award a \$100

voucher as part of a drawing to new and current riders who submitted applications. This quarter’s winner is **Melinda Van, Auditor Controller**. Congratulations, and thanks for riding the train!



Quarterly Drawing Winner, Melinda Van

## Commuter Club News



*"The Healthy Dining in Orange County Guide is a hit!"*

The Commuter Club members are raving about the new "Healthy Dining in Orange County" guide that contains discount coupons, recipes and hints on eating healthy at local participating restaurants! Here's a sample of the discounts our Commuter Club members are receiving just for ridesharing:

- \$5.00 OFF at Chin Chin Café in Tustin
- Free meal with purchase at Culinary Wraps in Brea or Costa Mesa
- \$5.00 OFF at El Torito (various locations)
- 15% OFF at J T Schmid's Brewhouse in Anaheim
- Free meal with purchase at McCormick & Schmick's in Irvine

All members who renewed their commitment to rideshare were recently sent the guide-book. If you are not currently receiving these great benefits, simply log onto the Commuter Assistance Program's web site at [www.oc.ca.gov/hr/rideshare](http://www.oc.ca.gov/hr/rideshare), click on **Incentive Programs** and print out a copy of the Commuter Club application. You can also pick up an application from one of Commuter Information Display racks located at 30 worksites throughout the County, or you can call the Message Center at 714/834-4068 for more information.

We now have Six Flags Magic Mountain, Cabrillo Marine Museum, Buena Park Entertainment Discount Coupons and Rubio's Baja Grill discounts for our rideshare participants! These and other new discount coupons will be sent to all new and renewing Commuter Club members. It's not too late to start ridesharing and send in your application!

## Carpool Classifieds

We have an updated list of County of Orange employees who would like to find a carpool partner to help make their commutes easier and help share the costs of driving to work. If you are interested in finding a carpool partner, please log onto the Commuter Assistance Program's web site at [www.oc.ca.gov/hr/rideshare](http://www.oc.ca.gov/hr/rideshare), and click on **Carpool Connection** for a list of carpool-ready commuters.

If you would like to be added to the on-line Carpool Classifieds list, click on **Request For Information** and print an application form to submit to us. You'll also find tips on forming a carpool, a map showing carpool lanes and information about the County Guaranteed Return Trip program for rideshare participants.





*"Commuter options from  
A to B... and back"*

## COMMUTER ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

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10 Civic Center Plaza  
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714-834-4068  
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The County Commuter Newsletter is published by the Commuter Assistance Program Office managed by the CEO/Human Resources. Our mission is to distribute commuter information to all County of Orange employees so that they can make informed decisions about how they travel to work. For more information about the Commuter Assistance Program, please go to web site.

## Dates & Web Sites You Should Know!

**April 22<sup>nd</sup> is Earth day 2003** – Please visit [www.earthday.org](http://www.earthday.org) for more information.

**April 24<sup>th</sup> is "Take Our Daughters and Sons To Work Day"** – Please visit [www.takeourdaughtersandsonstowork.org](http://www.takeourdaughtersandsonstowork.org) for more details. Remember that kids count in the car-pool lane too!

**May 15<sup>th</sup> is Bike To Work Day** – Sponsored by California Bicycle Coalition and can be reached at 800/679-BIKE or [www.bikelink.com](http://www.bikelink.com).

## Your Emergency Ride Home Is On Us

If you carpool, take the bus or train, vanpool, walk or bike to work and experience an emergency, need to pick up a sick child from school, or are asked to work unexpected over-time, you may be eligible for the County's Guaranteed Return Trip program.

In the event of an emergency on a day that you rideshare, you can either check out a county vehicle or use a taxi to get back to your

home or vehicle. A special voucher form should be completed when you have such an emergency. The form can be found at one of the 30 Commuter Information Display racks.

For more information about the program, log onto the Commuter Assistance Program's web site at [www.oc.ca.gov/hr/rideshare](http://www.oc.ca.gov/hr/rideshare), and click on **Applications and Brochures**.

## Clean Air Tips

Saving energy helps reduce air pollution. Whenever you burn a fossil fuel, you pollute the air. Make an effort to use less gasoline, natural gas, and electricity (the majority of power plants burn fossil fuels to generate electricity).

For instance, turn off appliances, lights, and equipment when not in use. You can also save by unplugging electronic devices and chargers when they are not in use. Don't forget to turn computers and printers off at the power strip. During warm weather months, set your thermostat to 78 degrees or higher when you are home, and 85 degrees or off when you are away. Using ceiling or room fans allows you to set the thermostat higher because the air movement will cool the room. You can save up to 3% for each degree the thermostat is set above 72 degrees. Reduce the operating time of your pool filter and automatic cleaning sweep to four to five hours, and only during off-peak times.

To help prevent electricity outages, avoid running your appliances during peak hours -- from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. -- or anytime an electricity emergency is declared. Do laundry more efficiently by using warm or cold water settings for washing your clothes. Always use cold water for rinsing clothes. Line dry clothes whenever you can. When you need to use the clothes dryer, run full loads, use the moisture-sensing setting, and clean the lint trap after each use. Conserve energy by running your dishwasher only when it is fully loaded, and turn off the dry cycle and air-dry the dishes instead.

See [www.flexyourpower.ca.gov](http://www.flexyourpower.ca.gov) for additional tips on reducing energy use around your home.